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Amendment Dated August 17, 2006
Serial No. 10/609,290

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IN THE CLAIMS

Claim 1. (Currently Amended) A method for supporting multiple Virtual Private Networks in a Multi-Protocol Over ATM/Next Hop Resolution Protocol (MPOA/NHRP) communication system, the method comprising the steps of:

establishing a connection in the communication system; and

using in-band signaling on the connection to identify to designate the connection for a number of Virtual Private Networks assigned to the connection.

Claim 2. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 1, wherein the ~~act~~ step of using in-band signaling to ~~designate the connection for a number of Virtual Private Networks~~ comprises:

using the in-band signaling to add a Virtual Private Network to the connection.

Claim 3. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 1, wherein the ~~act~~ step of using in-band signaling to ~~designate the connection for a number of Virtual Private Networks~~ comprises:

using the in-band signaling to remove a Virtual Private Network from the connection.

Claim 4-48. (Canceled)

Claim 49. (Currently Amended) A method for supporting multiple Virtual Private Networks using ~~the~~ Next Hop Resolution Protocol (NHRP) messages, the method comprising the steps of:

determining a Virtual Private Network for each NHRP message; and

encoding a Virtual Private Network identifier in each NHRP message.

Claim 50. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 49, wherein each NHRP message has a header, and wherein the act step of encoding the Virtual Private Network identifier in each NHRP message comprises including the Virtual Private Network identifier in a the header within each packet associated with that NHRP message.

Claim 51. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 50, wherein the header is a Logical Link Control/SubNetwork Attachment Point (LLC/SNAP) header.

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Claim 52. (Canceled)

Claim 53. (New) The method of claim 50, wherein the NHRP messages are NHRP control messages.

Claim 54. (New) The method of claim 1, wherein the connection in the communication system is designed to carry at least some of the Virtual Private Network traffic for the Virtual Private Networks assigned to the connection.